

# PARENT Talk



## Path to Strong Emotional Health

Your child's emotional health is the way he or she feels, thinks, behaves and relates to other people. It's important because it affects how he or she will perform in school, whether or not he or she will develop friendships, and possibly even how he or she will feel physically.

### Parents influence children's emotional health

A child's emotional health is especially influenced by a parent's emotional background.

Parental acceptance, the home environment, the outside world and heredity are also key factors. Alcoholism and abuse in families have long-term effects on children, causing insecurity and poor emotional adjustment that can affect development.

### Emotional growth shaped by family

How family members treat one another shapes a child's emotional growth and can have a lasting effect on his or her future well-being. When parents get along well and talk about problems together, children feel secure. Set an example by what you do and say. Be consistent in your expectations and discipline. Try to make your home a fun place to be.

### Encourage emotionally healthy behavior

Here are a few tips to nurture emotionally healthy behavior in your family.

- **Encourage your children to get along with each other.** Learning to cooperate with family members helps children get along with friends. To form lasting friendships, children need to know how to interact with others, which they can learn from their brothers and sisters.

- **Try to give equal and individual attention to each child.** Parent-child relationships are important in developing solid emotional health for children.
- **Provide an environment of love, acceptance, and security.** Trust your child's abilities. Give suitable responsibility, such as allowing a careful kindergartner to carry in the carton of eggs after grocery shopping.
- **Discuss your values and beliefs as a foundation for making choices.** Explain "why."
- **Give a sense of order and security from firm, consistent discipline.** This makes a child feel emotionally secure. Children feel unsure of themselves if they're unsure of what to expect from their surroundings.
- **Talk honestly about family problems such as death, illness, divorce, and money.**
- **Acquaint yourself with your child's friends.** You'll be better able to talk to your child, and you can more easily gauge his or her interactions.
- **Share your experiences** – this lets him or her know everyone makes mistakes sometimes. Your child won't be afraid to try new things if he or she feels it's OK to make mistakes.

### If you need help...

If you suspect your child has an emotional problem, call Crisis Services, at (810) 257-3740 where a counselor is always available. TTY users call (810) 232-6310. ©